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New Trends And Practices In Turkish Higher Education Policy: Teaching Staff Training Program (ÖYP)

Oğuzhan Zengin^a, Gözde Çakır^b^aHacettepe University, Economics and Administrative Faculty, Department of Social Work, Ankara 06410, Turkey^bKarabuk University, Safranbolu Fethi Tokar Fine Arts and Design Faculty, Department of Industrial Design, Karabuk 78600, Turkey

Abstract

Two of basic dimensions of lecturers in higher education institutions, who are identified as academicians, are functions of producing knowledge through scientific research and providing students with efficient theoretical and practical education service. Training of academicians as researchers and educators who constitute such manpower in higher education institutions are shaped by current high education policies in a country. Therefore, education programmes implemented to train academicians have a significant role in determining the qualifications of higher education.

According to Higher Education Personnel Code number 2914, academic teaching is conducted by three groups known as lecturers, instructors and prelectors with assistants. Academicians who serve under professor, associate professor and assistant professor cadres comprise the faculty members group. Lecturers and instructors are academicians who give lectures in their own fields and implement guidelines. In the group of teaching assistants; research assistants, specialists, translators and education-teaching planners take place.

In this paper, current situation of faculty members in our country and their training within the currently implemented higher education policy is being addressed.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0312976362

E-mail address: oguzen04@hacettepe.edu.tr¹

1. Introduction

With the new Turkish higher education strategy which can be summarized with the motto “one University for each Province”, forty one new universities are founded in the last five years. With these new foundation of universities however, the lack of academic personnel came into question. In order to overcome this absence of academicians, the Higher Education Council (YÖK) put into effect the Faculty Member Training Programme (ÖYP). This programme is a new model developed to fulfil the need of faculty members with the support of State Planning Agency (DPT) by blending the 33rd and 35th articles of higher education law number 2547, which comprises national and foreign doctorate degree education. In this model, while universities’ science and technology producing capacities are increased on one hand, faculty members are trained on the other. Under the coordination of the Presidency of Higher Education Council, the programme regulates in higher education institutions having the capacity for delivering post-graduate education, post graduate education of research assistants from other higher education institutions which have the need of faculty members.(Procedures and Principles Regarding Faculty Member Training Programme, Article 1). Hence, ÖYP which is developed to close the gap in the numbers of faculty members is designed so as to train scientifically well equipped faculty members in a reputable university and a good research environment. Within the programme if required, students are economically and legally supported to attend language training for three months and carry out research for one year in during their doctoral thesis period abroad. ÖYP therefore is a domestic alternative to Post-graduate Education Programme Abroad (YLSY) which has been implemented by the cooperation of Ministry of National Education and YÖK for some time. A total of 5500 vacancies within ÖYP were designated, 2500 for universities founded in 2010 and 3000 for universities founded in 2011.As for this year, designation of 4000 vacancies for ÖYP is being expressed by YÖK officials.

2.Conditions of admission to the programme

Being younger than 35 years of age, not possessing any health obstacles which would prevent working as a research assistant, a minimum score of 70 (seventy) from ALES (Academic Personnel and Post-graduate Training Entrance Examination). (Scores obtained from this test are valid for three years following the test date). Placements will be made according to 35% of grade point average, 50% of ALES score, 15% of foreign language test score if any. (<http://personel.yok.gov.tr/OypDuyuru/?sayfa=aciklamalar>).

3. Post-graduate training placement

If research assistants accepted into the programme have 65 or higher foreign language score, they usually make a preference among post-graduate programmes of reputable universities over the internet during selection periods and in their relevant field. Admission of research assistants into this programme is according to their ÖYP scores. Research assistants with lower than 65 language score are placed with their ÖYP scores in 15 universities designated by YÖK to go through a language course for 6 months. Research assistants who cannot score a minimum 50 language points for a period of two years within their taking office are discharged from the university.

4. Study Period

ÖYP study period for post-graduate education is 4 half years, for doctorate programme 8 and for integrated doctorate programme 10 half years. For research assistants who could not complete their thesis work, a maximum 2 half years for post-graduate and 4 half years for doctorate or integrated doctorate

degree are additionally provided upon thesis monitoring committee's reasoned decision and approval of institution's governing board. Research assistants who are provided with additional time cannot make use the support provided within the programme. (Procedures and Principles Regarding Faculty Member Training Programme, Article 9).

5. Completion of post-graduate education and assignment for faculty member

ÖYP research assistance who successfully graduate from doctorate programme, return within latest a month to their assignments in universities for which they are obligated for compulsory service. In faculty member vacancy announcements, departments where research assistants who successfully completed post-graduate education within ÖYP are given priority. (Procedures and Principles Regarding Faculty Member Training Programme, Article 23).

6. Compulsory Service Agreement

Before being assigned to universities where they will receive post-graduate education, research assistants sign a bill. This bill states that research assistants will work in their affiliated universities for a period as long as the duration of their post-graduate education, otherwise, they should reimburse the total amount of salaries they received.

7. Foreign country experience

Upon their request, research assistants who scored a minimum of 65 from KPDSor ÜDS can be assigned for a foreign language course abroad for three months. Furthermore, again upon request, they can conduct their research for a maximum of three months during their post-graduate period and for a maximum of twelve months during their doctorate thesis period abroad. (Procedures and Principles Regarding Faculty Member Training Programme, Article 17).

8. Budget availabilities

Each research assistant and his advisor has a budget of 50.000 TL;20.000 of which is for project expenses (procurements for post-graduate education, basic office equipment, waste material, machine-equipment and service procurement) and 30.000 of which is for travel expenses (Long term foreign assignments for research assistants – *for a maximum of 1 year during the course of education* –, attending national or international scientific meetings – *maximum 15 days annually* –, attending short term national or international scientific meetings for advisors – *maximum 15 days annually*)(oyyp.uludag.edu.tr/belgeler/ogretim_uyesi_yetistirilme_esaslari.pdf).

9. Conclusion

Conclusively, higher education policy, shaped with the discourse of one university for each province is in the process of developing certain projects in order to overcome the shortcomings in the number of academic personnel in newly funded universities. One of such projects is the ÖYP. With ÖYP, young science people who has international experience, academically valid foreign language ability, familiarity with the scientific developments in the outside world, are affiliated with the scientific institutions in other countries, able to multi-directionally evaluate scientific facts, well trained in rooted national or international universities and has high research and reporting capability are expected to positively contribute to Turkish higher education system.

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